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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ATHENS 001103

SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/06/30

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SUBJECT: A/S Gordon's June 27 Meeting with Polish FM Sikorski: Russia
Relations, Missile Defense, Eastern Partnership

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CLASSIFIED BY: Philip Gordon, Assistant Secretary; REASON: 1.4(B),
(D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: EUR Assistant Secretary Gordon met with Polish
Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski on the margins of the June 27-28
NATO-Russia Council and OSCE Informal Ministerial in Corfu, Greece.
Their discussion centered on Georgia, U.S.-Russia nuclear
disarmament negotiations, missile defense and the associated status
of forces agreement (SOFA), Afghanistan and the Balkans, the EU
Eastern Partnership, and the Community of Democracies. END
SUMMARY.

GEORGIA

12. (C) FM Sikorski expressed concern that a "reset" of U.S.-Russia
relations could let Russia off the hook on Georgia. Sikorski noted
that the Sarkozy-brokered Russia-Georgia ceasefire, while
imperfect, showed that the EU had at least tried to solve the
Georgia situation--but that the U.S. needed to do more. A/S Gordon
said the U.S. firmly supported Georgia's territorial sovereignty
and was committed to its allies, and noted that Russia had indeed
paid a cost for its actions: increased isolation in the OSCE and on
the international stage. A/S Gordon said European partners, such
as the Germans and the British, were also increasingly fed up with
Russian behavior--especially the French, who had personally
negotiated the ceasefire. A/S Gordon affirmed that the U.S. wanted
a constructive relationship with Russia but said early signs were
not encouraging.

NUKE NEGOTIATIONS, MISSILE DEFENSE, SOFA

13. (C) Sikorski asked about U.S.-Russia nuclear disarmament negotiations, saying that he hoped Russia would not take advantage of the U.S. in the process. A/S Gordon replied that the Russians really wanted an agreement, and that the U.S. would not have to give away many incentives to clinch a good deal. Sikorski said he was awaiting clear U.S. action on implementing the missile defense agreement, stating that U.S. credibility would suffer if the agreement were weakened or canceled. Poland was "delighted" that the Russians had backed off of their threat to deploy missiles in Kaliningrad, Sikorski said, and Poland continued to be willing to grant the Russians intrusive inspection access to missile defense facilities.

14. (C) Sikorski also noted that the U.S.-Poland missile defense agreement provided for the deployment of Patriot batteries in two phases: in phase one, a Patriot missile battery would begin rotating through Poland in 2009; in phase two, a permanent battery starting January 13, 2010, with Polish concurrence. Sikorski said there were no legal impediments for the U.S. to start a Patriot rotation in 2009; Poland would be flexible. Sikorski stressed that a status of forces agreement (SOFA) was not required for the rotation phase, and would only be required for the second, permanent phase--any signals to the contrary from Polish politicians were just "political jockeying." As for the terms of an eventual SOFA, Sikorski stated his preference for one similar to the U.S.-Spain SOFA; an agreement based on the U.S.-UK SOFA would be outdated and would not take into account more recent EU legal considerations. Sikorski also noted that the missile defense agreement was supposed to result in economic benefits for Poland; this is why Poland did not want to give American companies tax exemptions--with an exemption the Polish government would see less economic benefit.

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AFGHANISTAN / BALKANS

15. (C) Sikorski stated that Poland had 2,000 troops in Afghanistan now and would send an additional 200 to support the Afghani elections. Sikorski said that he personally hoped that Polish forces on the ground eventually would grow to 2,500 or even 3,000--making the Poles the largest contingent in southern Afghanistan. A/S Gordon expressed appreciation for the Polish contribution; the U.S. was worried, however, that some EU nations were pushing too fast to draw down EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia-Herzegovina, before the Peace Implementation Council had an full chance to make its determination on the future of the Office of the High Representative. Sikorski confirmed that Poland was one of the EU countries wanting a quick drawdown, preferring to reduce troop strength in the Balkans in order to deploy more to Afghanistan. A/S Gordon noted that EUFOR ALTHEA had a critical role and had relatively few troops to begin with.

EU EASTERN PARTNERSHIP, BELARUS

16. (C) Sikorski said that he hoped for greater U.S. engagement with the EU Eastern Partnership (EaP), and proposed a "Friends of the Eastern Partnership" group that the U.S. could take part in. This group could support EaP countries by contributing to projects in areas such as democracy promotion. A/S Gordon cautioned that creating such a group might open a "Pandora's Box"--while it was

hard for Russia to oppose the EaP, an EU-centered initiative focused on democracy and stability, adding the specter of American involvement would complicate matters. A/S Gordon said that the U.S. would continue to support an EaP that stayed under EU leadership.

¶7. (C) Sikorski described Belarus as a good example of how EU engagement, through the EaP, could bear fruit. According to Sikorski, there had been five recent improvements in Belarus: 1) President Lukashenko was "no longer killing opponents," 2) Lukashenko had made a positive gesture to Europe by visiting the Vatican in April, 3) various EU foreign ministers had visited Belarus in the last few months, 4) Sikorski had been able to meet opposition leaders freely during his own visit, and 5) EU-Belarus trade had "boomed," with Belarus now exporting more to Europe than to Russia--a clear sign that Belarus' interests were beginning to lean more towards Europe. A/S Gordon added that Lukashenko's non-recognition of South Ossetia and the recent milk customs dispute with Russia were good signs, and inquired how the U.S. could practically support the EaP. Sikorski said U.S. expertise on human rights, the environment, border control, and migration would be useful, and that his top two priorities for EaP nations were to liberalize 1) trade and 2) freedom of movement / visa restrictions with EU nations. Sikorski noted, however, that the Germans were particularly averse reducing immigration restrictions for EaP countries.

COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES / INVITATIONS

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¶8. (C) Sikorski described his desire to rejuvenate the Community of Democracies (CD), which has its 10th anniversary in June 2010. The CD was inaugurated in Warsaw in 2000 with the attendance of then-Secretary Madeleine Albright, Sikorski noted, and a high-profile 10th anniversary event would stress the importance of democracy promotion--with Poland serving as a good example of a young, successfully democratized country. Sikorski invited Secretary Clinton to consider attending a 10th anniversary event. A/S Gordon replied that he would pass the invite to the Secretary, but also noted a concern that the CD grouping included countries lacking a practical commitment to democracy.

¶9. (C) A/S Gordon said that Vice President Biden would soon visit Georgia and the United Kingdom. Sikorski asked when Biden could visit Poland, suggesting September 1 (the 70th anniversary of World War II) as a potential date. Sikorski noted that the Germans and Russians had already agreed to come, but that the British had not yet committed.

¶10. (U) Assistant Secretary Gordon cleared this cable.
SPECKHARD